

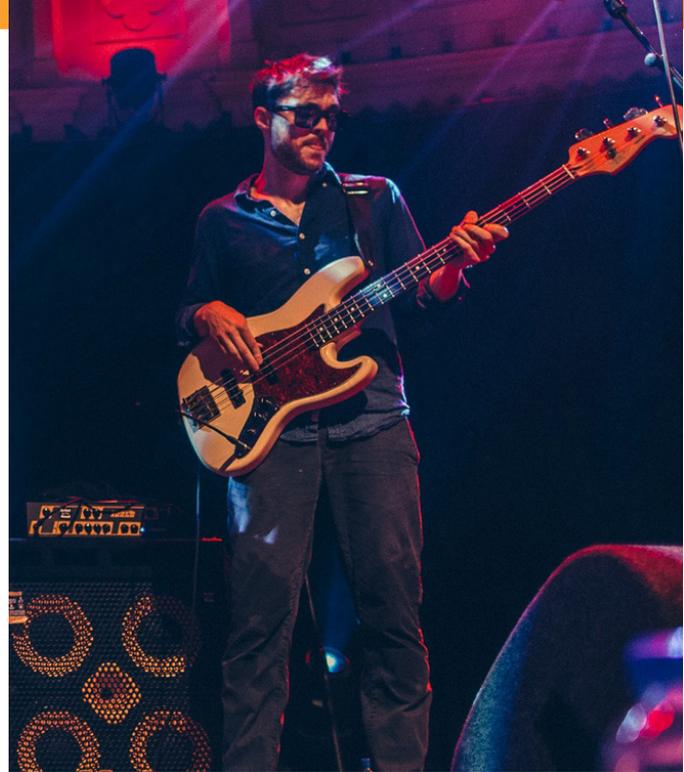
# Joe Dart

**Bands:** Vulfpeck, The Fearless Flyers

**Markbass Rig:** Little Mark Vintage 500 Watt Head, Standard 104HR 4x10 Cabinet

Thanks to his tight-pocketed 16th note lines, soulful licks, explosive solos, and bass grooves so beloved and recognizable that audiences sing along to them, Joe Dart has skyrocketed into a superstar of the bass world. His main band, Vulfpeck, came onto the scene in 2011, quickly acquiring a rabid fan base and much critical acclaim, while his other project, The Fearless Flyers, has garnered the same kind of success. Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Dart's love of bass started at the age of eight, when his obsession with funk, soul, and R&B music propelled him to find his own voice on the instrument. Known for his charismatic stage presence and skillful improvisational chops, Dart followed in the footsteps of his low end idols like Flea, Rocco Prestia, Pino Palladino, and James Jamerson in propelling the bass into the spotlight of every performance he gives.

In touring all over the world, Dart played a large variety of bass amps through using the backline of venues, which often proved frustrating in trying to dial in the sound he desired each night. But over time, the one amp brand that Dart was excited to see at venues were those made by Markbass, as he quickly learned that their consistency and powerful tone gave him the clarity to not only perform at a higher level, but also convey the sound that was in his head. "These amps sound like my hands, my bass, and my playing. Not overly colored or effected – just a deep, punchy, warm, and clear projection of what it is that I'm putting out there. It feels absolutely amazing." In 2017, just as Vulfpeck was getting ready to release their third album, Mr. Finish Line, Dart connected with Markbass owner and creator, Marco De Virgiliis, who welcomed him into his family of artists. Now, not only does Dart have the bass tone he's been searching for his whole life, he also knows that every concert and performance he gives, he'll never have to worry about what amp will be waiting for him on stage.



## When was the first time you ever played a Markbass amp?

One of the first real cross-country tours that I was ever a part of was with a fellow University of Michigan alum named Darren Criss. The musical director of the tour was none other than Theo Katzman (Vulfpeck, solo artist). Darren had a bass rig in his studio and he offered to let me use it for the tour. It was a Markbass 4x10 and 800-watt head. I'd never played one before and I fell in love with it instantly. It was deep, punchy, warm and clear, with no harshness whatsoever. It didn't hurt that it was light as a feather either!

## What is it about the Markbass tone that is important to your overall sound?

From the first moment that I played them I felt that it was the type of amp that really lets the player's voice and personality come through. The sound is warm and incredibly pleasing, but it really does not get in the way at all. It's got a true and transparent quality to it, which I really appreciate as a bassist who often plays in very stripped-down settings.

**What made you choose the Little Mark Vintage head?**

It is the head that embodied the combination of old and new that I feel Markbass does extremely well. You can dial in an old-school warmth and a tube type of vibe and mix in or switch over to a more modern, punchy tone for a great slap sound. I find it to be very versatile and sound beautiful in any setting.

**What separates these amps from other brands and models?**

To me, they're in a class of their own. Nothing sounds nearly as good live as far as I'm concerned. And when you add to that what a kind and cool team it is that runs the company, it can't be beat. Marco, Riccardo, and the whole crew in Italy are deeply passionate about what they do, and I'm honored to be one of the bassists lucky enough to find myself on their roster.

**You use a variety of techniques when you perform. How do you make sure your tone stays balanced regardless of what style you're playing?**

One thing I really dig is the ability to dial up or down a brighter or warmer tone on the fly. My goal is to balance the two equally. That's what I strive for no matter what technique I'm using. Different techniques sound better with different EQs, so I need to be able to adjust that based on the song. These amps make that super easy for me.

**You play concerts of varying sizes from Madison Square Garden to intimate clubs. How do you keep your bass sound consistent regardless of the venue?**

I go DI straight out of the back of my head, with a mic on the cabinet for big venues like Madison Square Garden. For a smaller club gig, I often don't need a ton of support from the PA – just a bit of reinforcement. It's cool to be able to play a small club and know that the front few rows are getting the sound straight out of the cabinet, and that it's a warm and round tone coming directly from the stage.

**Aside from their amps, what else drew you to Markbass?**

The Italian lifestyle! The passion of the team, the impeccable workmanship, their attention to detail, their response to the needs and desires of bass players, the unmistakable quality of tone that every one of their amps and cabinets brings. They're really a bassist's dream.

**What is it like working with Marco and the Markbass team?**

You can tell when someone is truly passionate, inspired, and excited about bass and music in general. I got that immediately from Marco and the team, even just over email. This was confirmed when

I first met them in person at NAMM in 2018. I've never met a more passionate, positive, and tireless group of people. I think that's what it must take to make a product like they have.

**This year has been turbulent with the COVID pandemic and the subsequent halting of shows and tours. How have you been keeping busy?**

I feel very lucky in that Vulfpeck had decided to take 2020 off from touring. We played Madison Square Garden in September, which was a surreal and unforgettable experience for us, and it represented a perfect culmination of the first era of the band. We really decided to hit the reset button after that. We had no idea what a reset 2020 would actually be. So I've been at home – shedding, recording remotely, and spending time with my family. I'm looking forward to getting back on the road next year with a renewed appreciation for live music and all that it can bring.

**You've become a big influence in the bass world. Did you ever foresee reaching the status that you have as a player?**

It's the greatest honor of my life. When I was young I looked up to and learned the bass lines of the likes of Flea, Bootsy Collins, James Jamerson, Rocco Prestia, and so many others. To be included on a list of influential bass players makes me feel that every step along the musical journey has been worth it. And having reliable gear like my Markbass amps and the team who builds them in my corner makes that all possible. –MB

